



*State Capitol | Lansing, Michigan 48913*

*PH (517) 373.7350 | FAX (517) 373.9228*

*[www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/patterson/](http://www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/patterson/)*

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Contact: Christopher Kelley  
(517) 373-7350

### **Watershed alliance bill passes Senate unanimously**

**LANSING** – Legislation creating a voluntary watershed alliance to protect Michigan’s waterways unanimously passed the Senate today, announced Sen. Bruce Patterson, R-Canton.

Senate Bill 1432, sponsored by Patterson, legally defines the concept of a voluntary “Watershed Alliance” for the local protection and enhancement of Michigan’s waters -- rivers, streams, lakes and ponds.

“This bill will allow and encourage local governments to cooperate in voluntary alliances to study, create and enact the best plans for a specific watershed,” Patterson said. “The Rouge River group provided a model, and this legislation gives a legal recognition to their good work. I think this will inspire many to follow suit, for the improvement and preservation of our wonderful state’s precious natural water systems.”

Under the provisions of the bill, two or more municipalities can form an alliance and then extend invitations to other entities within the same watershed. The alliance can study problems and plan and undertake activities to address surface water quality, water flow, and other issues of mutual concern.

Kurt Heise of Wayne Co. has spoken in support of the bill. It is supported by the state Department of Environmental Quality, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, the Van Buren Township Board, Tom Yack of Canton Township, the Detroit Free Press editorial board and several prominent environmental groups.

“The alliances allowed by this bill are not given any authority to tax or impose fees,” Patterson said. “They must be funded by voluntary contributions of the bodies that choose to be part of them. But they will have the legal authority to seek grants and funds from wider sources. They will be able to hire specialists to do scientific research that will assist the alliance in pursuing the best possible course of coordinated action within a watershed.”

“This pioneering legislation will set a good precedent, and I think other states will look to this fine example being advanced in Michigan today,” said Patterson, an avid outdoorsman and conservationist.

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